

**DEVELOPING STUDENTS' CAPACITY AGAINST EXAMINATION
MALPRACTICE BEHAVIOURS THROUGH SELECTED
PSYCHOSOCIAL STRATEGIES**

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ABSTRACT

Examination malpractice refers to all forms of cheating and illegal examination related offences that gives student unmerited grades, promotion or higher placement. Some causes of examination malpractice include those connected to institutional, societal and personal variables. As expected, several solutions have been suggested to curb it and those tested have shown some results. But yet, the strategies have not done much in addressing the personal variables, particularly those that should target changing the cognitive and affective antisocial orientation and build their capabilities on ethics and study. These are expected to help students desist from examination malpractice behaviors. One researcher noted that it is almost a routine for students to cheat. The present researcher perceive that the right intervention has not been used to curb examination malpractice among students across all level of the education, which may be the reason it still persists. In fact, examination malpractice is equally evolving in sophistication and assuming innovative dimensions, so this intervention is apt. Suffice to emphasize that examination malpractice in the education system if not curbed continues to undermine the achievement of quality education and production of quality graduates. The consequences of it among middle and high skilled work force has caused the society so much disappointment and loss. Losses incurred in retraining programs to enhance work adjustment of employees, inability to perform as a graduate when called up to, to mention some. Therefore, intervention in student's classroom learning is needed such as lessons on how to process information and to make use of memory strategies in studying. This is with the view to besides achieving good academic performance, but to help more of them to be self-reliant, productive and employable in this 21st century economy and beyond. The paper concludes that unlearning examination malpractice behavior

among students is achievable. Adoption of these intervention strategies can increase students' confidence, self-esteem and self-efficacy. Overall quality education would be engendered. Suggestions such as instructors should be more creative in teaching and students should imbibe good study habits were made.

Keywords: *examination malpractice behaviors, psychosocial intervention, students' capacity*

Introduction

It's a normal practice that after teachers' effort in imparting learners, the learners are given test or examination to ascertain learning outcome. Of course, the good teacher usually has high expectation for excellent performance from their students, but this hope is shattered by students' involvement in examination malpractice. Testing and test taking is an agelong school practice for taking decisions about the teaching-learning process. In Nigeria, examination is reported to have begun with the introduction of formal education since the 19th century ([Anikweze,2018](#)). Test and examination administration on learners is a policy which help in taking critical decisions

on learner's progress, promotion and certification. Therefore, evaluation of students is not to be perceived as punishment but part of development milestone along the levels. Unfortunately, for some student's decisions taken on their academic standing and progress are taken from false report (pass grade gotten from examination malpractice). The consequences of this falsehood can affect future endeavors in school and society especially if the affected students have no opportunity for intervention. The desktop review method is the network used in organizing materials for this writeup. Data used is derived from published works including academic articles, journals, conference papers, textbooks, and internet

materials. The main purpose of this research work was to survey theoretical backgrounds and previous studies on the concept of examination malpractice, contributing factors, consequences and ways to build capacity of students against the dishonest and unethical behavior.

Conceptual, literature and theoretical review

Extermination malpractice refers to actions carried out by persons involved in setting examinations, typing examination questions, storing examination papers, administering examinations, taking examinations, grading examinations and recording the examination scores, before, during or after the examination, that leads to falsification of scores derived from the examination or grants undue advantage to one or some examinees over others ([Ntamu, 2017](#)). Examination malpractice can be regarded as all forms of cheating and manipulation of

scores of a testee which directly or indirectly give fake representation of the testee's learning outcome and aptitude. Examination malpractice is a dishonest and unethical behavior because it is the use of illegal means to score good grades and flouting the rules and regulations guiding the examination([Ntamu,2017](#)). Examination malpractice gives students false result and competence and some who cannot defend such results really develop apathy and phobia whenever they need to do work that test their competence. There is tendency for these ones to continue to cheat in test. Many forms of examination malpractice have been identified in Nigeria. These are tattoo, token, contract, expo, computo, impersonation, question paper leakage, aiding of students by lecturers, collusion among students, use of unauthorized materials in the examination hall, giraffe or extending of neck to copy from others ([Oyibe, Uma & Ibina,](#)

2015, [Udim, Abubakar & Essien](#), 2018; [Ibrahim](#), 2021).

Literature has identified several factors responsible for examination malpractice including; institutional, societal and personal variables. Institutional variables include poor school facilities, poor sitting arrangement for examinations. Societal variables include; poor implementation of examination malpractice act, noninvolvement in school programmes. Personal variables include socio-economic factors, poor school attendance, low morality and corrupt tendencies. Some researchers report that most times examination malpractices are aided and abetted by teachers, parents, school heads and examination officials and supervisors at external examination venues. ([Ampofo Ampofo Orji Ibrahim Udim](#), 2020). In the tertiary institutions, examination malpractice takes the form of impersonation, bribery, sex

for grades among other unethical behaviors ([Bisong, Bisong & Orji](#), 2019). Among the personal factors are; poor school attendance, moral decadence, poor orientation in test taking, poor study habits, and low social skills ([Orji](#), 2021a)

Theoretical review

The study leans on the following theory:

Socio-cognitive theory by Albert [Bandura](#) (2004).

Socio-cognitive theory of [Bandura](#) (2004) is apt in this paper because the theory posits that cognitive processes mediate behavioral changes. The behavior change expected after teaching students psychosocial strategies to build their capacity against examination malpractice behaviors, is change in perception of examination malpractice as an instrument to pass test or examinations. The capacity developed enhances their self-confidence and self-efficacy to test taking.

Statement of the problem

The depth of examination malpractice involvement in both internal and public examinations in Nigeria is perplexing and depressing. The situation has kept this researcher and many others wondering if the learners are nurtured to cheat in examination. Examination malpractice is not right, it is a negative trend in the education system that should be totally curbed. It remains an ill wind for the education system if educators allow the tendency to cheat in examination or examination malpractice to be internalized among students as seen in the examination malpractice involvement incidents across all levels of education (Ayanniyi & Anya, 2017, [Oyibe, Uma & Ibina](#), 2015, [Udim, Abubakar & Essien](#), 2018, [Ibrahim](#), 2021). The consequences of examination malpractice include; label of the Nigeria education system as producing poor quality school leavers and graduates,

producing incompetent and unemployable middle and high skilled labor, among many. Some measures to curb examination malpractice employed by some institutions include, use of counseling, use of billboards with inscription condemning examination malpractice behaviors, disciplinary actions such as suspension and expulsion, sometimes society react to cases of gross examination malpractice by ordering the close down of suspected schools or examination centres. Despite these measures, examination malpractice behavior is found among many students. The interest of this researcher is to seek lasting solution to examination malpractice in the Nigerian educational system through teaching of selected psychosocial strategies.

Justification for introducing psychosocial intervention strategies

The present researchers believe that examination malpractice tendencies should be extinguished from the mindsets of students across the levels of education by introducing psychosocial intervention strategies. These would help to improve reading and learning, thus provide the needed panacea to examination malpractice behaviors and tendencies. It is the belief of this researcher that since these strategies are capacity-oriented students will be empowered both cognitively and affectively against examination malpractice going forward. Also, improved refusal and self-control skills could further enable them to take personal decisions that rework their cognition against examination malpractice tendencies, thus contribute to national development. When this happens, the system would be reckoned with to produce quality graduates. Also, these selected psychosocial strategies would be encouraged

in schools as instrument for behavioral modification against examination malpractice.

Developing students' capacity against examination malpractice behaviors

1. Psychological intervention strategies

a) Teaching students to understand Information processing in memory.

Memory has come to be known as an ability and a process and it can be examined from many different perspectives. Information in memory must be obtained through interaction with the enrichment (nurture) provided by class room interaction and studying. Memory capacity is part of the biological equipment (nature). Therefore, the memory process is an example of the interaction of nature and nurture. What is experienced is what is internalized and from the impression internalized, expression is made in words, action and grades obtained in test and examination.

The study of memory and how to improve it has spanned many decades and over the years researchers continue to seek more ways to enhance academic performance of learners. Of particular interest to many teachers is on how pupils and students can process information more effectively and actively use memory aids, imagery and other learning strategies to retrieve information from memory more effectively and minimize forgetting, thus improving their quality of learning and capacity against examination malpractice behaviors.

b) Teaching students to understanding the concept of forgetting

Forgetting is explained by the fact that some individuals fail to encode information for entry into their memory. Forgetting can also be experienced when one is unable to retrieve information from memory, lack of retrieval cues, proactive or retroactive

inhibition and motivated forgetting ([Ukpong, 2011](#)). For learners it is important to thrive to learn effectively in order to minimize incidences of forgetting. This is by ensuring proper information processing at all memory stages (encoding, storage and retrieval). Information reaching the learner are not always fully encoded because some are lost or not properly stored. Therefore, to ensure information is properly encoded, the application of extra effort in rehearsing and elaboration are needed on the part of the learners, otherwise forgetting may persist, resulting to test anxiety and tendency toward to examination malpractice behaviors.

c) **Introducing students to adapt two or more memory strategies in their study to improve memory. Some of these are:** ([Thorne, 2006](#); [Ukpong, 2011](#); [Ajake, & Amalu, 2011](#), [Chang, 2015](#))

Mnemonics: These are memory aids for effective learning. Mnemonics are worked out

by using the first letters of a piece of information to create some form of an acronym or rhyme to help one remember more quickly that particular information. Valued information is made into words and phrases to be more easily. For example, to remember the nine planets in order which are: Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto [MVEMJSUNP]. To remember colors of the rainbow [ROYGBIVS]. Red, ORANGE, Yellow, Green, Blue, Indigo, Violet. For stages of grief; [DABDA]: Depression, Anger, Bargaining, Denial and Acceptance.

Acronyms: An acronym is a word made up from the first letters of a list of words. You take the list of words that you want to remember and put them in an order so that the first letters of each word spell a real word or a list of words. It serves as a cue that can help students remember names of words. For e.g., ECOWAS –Economic

Community of West African States. NYSC - National Youth Service Corps. PHCN - Power Holding Company of Nigeria.

Rhyming and use of Songs: Rhymes and songs can be used to remember information very easily. e.g., the number of days in each month of the year can be recalled with the rhyme. Thirty days has September, April, June and November. All the rest have thirty-one excepting February alone which has about twenty-eight and twenty-nine days in each leap year.

Chunking: This is breaking up information into sizeable units for easier memorizing. For e.g., numbers such as ID number, ATM card number, Phone number, can be chunked into units for easy memorization when needed.

Storytelling: Story telling helps you remember information in any subject by focusing on the key point of what you are learning and arranging them in a logical sequence.

Rehearsing: When you want to remember

information, you have to practice it, or else it fades. Just as actors need to rehearse in order to remember their lines, students need to rehearse what they are learning. Use a multisensory approach every time you rehearse: say it, write it, and sing it.

Over learning: This is one way of improving retention. It involves frequent practice of the newly learnt materials so that it becomes part and parcel of the learner. The learner can easily recall or retrieve this information on demand

Imagery or Visualization: Students can form mental picture of information to enable them remember association.

Meaningfulness of material: This is trying to understand the material being learnt by making a connection between it and previous experience or learning for clearer understanding. This is because the more deeply, clearly and elaborately an

experience is impressed or encoded in the brain, the better the ability to retrieve it.

Apply the SQ3R study guide

This Survey, **Q**uestion, **R**ead, **R**ecite and **R**evision (SQ3R) system for effective reading is an evidence-based study guide, particularly in studying materials in textbooks. Evidence abound that the method is effective in helping learners achieve their goal of reading and studying for test and examination. ([Thorne](#), 2006, [Ukpong](#), 2011 & [Orji](#), 2021b)

Survey requires that the learner glance through the pages of the chapter or module as a preliminary exercise and motivation to study. This is achieved by reading and taking note of the titles and major headings throughout the pages to the last paragraph.

Question require that the learner pose reasonable questions (using What? Why? Who? When? Where? about the text based on the headings of the text. This is effective in

enhancing better understanding and insightful gain in knowledge.

Read, Recite and Review help the learner to establish learning because understanding is enhanced by re-reading, rehearsing and elaborating by reciting what has been read. This is achieved by reading the chapter or module thoroughly with full focus and attention, avoiding every distraction. Review of questions posed at the question stage will enhance further the understanding of the material. Using one's ingenuity is important by applying relevant memory strategies for better memory.

2. Social intervention strategies

The following strategies can develop the capacity of students and help minimize examination malpractice behaviors.

i) Counselling of students and their parents on the ills of examination malpractice behaviors to them and society at large.

ii) Orientation of students on arrival to a programme in their institution or school.

iii) Students should receive social skills training, particularly refusal and self-control

iv) Teachers retaining is needed for improved classroom teaching and testing.

v) Study Habits training for students to enhance self-confidence and self esteem

x) Encouraging mock test taking for examination to improve self-efficacy of learners([Idika](#), 2005)

Conclusion

Learning effectively and unlearning examination malpractice behavior among students is achievable. The importance of a good study habit cannot be overemphasized. It increases students' confidence, self-esteem and self-efficacy. It reduces test anxiety and promotes social skills among students. And generally, students with excellent study habits perform better than those with lesser quality of study habits. Effective learning can be fostered through students' active involvement in class

and development of excellent study habits and implementation of those memory strategies in their studying.

Suggestions.

The following suggestions are made for education stakeholders and for learners.

1. All education stakeholders should help instill good examination behavior in students by encouraging them to imbibe excellent study habits and other school behaviors for effective learning.

2. All pupils and students should learn how to improve their memory through understanding how they process information by mastering their learning style, the concept of forgetting and how thrive to implement memory strategies in their reading and studying.

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